This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS LJUBLJANA 000217

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR OES/ENV/THOMPSON
DEPARTMENT FOR OES/PCI, EUR/NCE, EUR/ERA
DEPARTMENT PASS TO EPA (STEPHEN JOHNSON, CHARLIE AUER, SUSAN HAZEN)
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST FOR POSNER-MULLEN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SENV AORC ETRD PREL SI
SUBJECT: SLOVENIA OFFERS EXPERTISE ON MERCURY REDUCTION

REF: STATE 18970

¶1. During a 30 March demarche on an unrelated matter, Emil Ferjancic, Post's main interlocutor at the Ministry of the Environment, told Econoff and Econ Specialist Slovenia was interested in providing its expertise in mercury containment and reduction "if asked to do so." Post delivered reftel talking points to Ferjancic in early February, but until this meeting the GOS had yet to provide a response.

¶2. Ferjancic said Slovenia has extensive expertise in addressing mercury containment and reduction, largely thanks to domestic efforts to contain environmental mercury at a mine in Idrija in central Slovenia. (Note: The mine, which no longer produces mercury, is in the process of being closed down. End note.) Dr. Milena Horvat of the Jozef Stefan Institute is the leading Slovenian expert on mercury containment. Horvat's research is aimed at decreasing the risk of mercury exposure of the Idrija miners, finding ways to lower the risk of mercury-related diseases and, most recently, finding the most appropriate and effective ways to restore areas contaminated with mercury.

¶3. Horvat's work resulted in a model for restoration of contaminated areas. Her model recognizes that larger areas cannot be treated with conventional measures, such as burning the soil to trap mercury, as this would further harm the region's ecosystems. Rather, the model assesses the long-term environmental and economic impact of mercury contamination over a wide region. Horvat developed her model during examination of the region surrounding the Slovene mine, where mercury contamination has spread throughout the region all the way to the Adriatic Sea. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has adopted Horvat's model. In addition, a group of Slovene and Chinese scientists are currently using Horvat's model to address large-scale mercury contamination issues in China.

¶4. Horvat's researchers at the Institute organize conferences and roundtables every 2-3 years. These conferences involve a wide range of issues pertaining to mercury contamination. The objective of these meetings, aside from exchange of scientific findings, is to raise awareness of mercury contamination problems and the challenges with restoration of contaminated areas.

¶5. Post notes that Dr. Horvat could be a valuable contact on mercury contamination issues and both she and the GOS are prepared to engage further on this issue at the request of the Department. Post requests OES response via cable or email to Econ Officer John Nylin (nylinjd@state.gov) and Econ Specialist Spela Zlatnar (zlatnars@state.gov).

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